

SAS doctors

The term 'SAS doctor' includes specialty doctors and specialist grade doctors with at least four years of postgraduate training, two of which are in a relevant specialty.

SAS doctors are a diverse group with a wide range of skills, experience and specialties. They are an essential part of the medical workforce.

Female hospital doctor with male patient

A career as an SAS doctor can be a very satisfying and rewarding alternative to becoming a consultant or GP and there are many different reasons for choosing it as a long or short term career option.

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SAS doctor posts usually offer the opportunity to focus predominantly on providing direct patient care and less on the other clinical and non-clinical responsibilities required of a consultant or trainee. However, depending on their personal interests and experience - and the available opportunities in their trust and specialty - SAS doctors are encouraged to be involved in teaching, service development, research or management and leadership.

Becoming a SAS doctor may allow you to:

- work more flexibly without having to meet the requirements of a formal training programme
- work in a specific geographical location without having to rotate to different units
- work in a subspecialty which suits you
- optimise your work-life balance, as the hours may be more regular than for trainees or consultants
- gain experience to enhance your application for a specialty training post
- have more time to study for membership exams
- achieve a portfolio career, with several distinct roles
- develop your knowledge, skills and experience to apply to join the GMC Specialist or GP register via the portfolio pathway (previously known as the CESR - Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration or CEGPR -Certificate of Eligibility for General Practice)

Registration)

Prior to 2008, SAS doctors were appointed to staff grade or associate specialist posts. Since 2008 these grades have been closed to new entrants, with all new SAS doctor appointments being specialty doctors. From 2021 a new specialist grade role was introduced which offers career progression for specialty doctors. A copy of the contract for SAS doctors (specialty doctors and specialist grades) is available in [NHS Employers' NHS terms and conditions of service handbook](#) [1].

Career progression for SAS doctors

Specialty doctors can progress to the new specialist grade which sits between the specialty doctor and consultant grades. Specialist grades will still mainly focus on providing direct clinical care but will also have further development opportunities such as management, additional responsibilities, research and clinical academia.

SAS doctors also have opportunities to access an increasing number of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities through different national initiatives. They're regularly involved in teaching, leading service development, and research.

Contact your local [Health Education England office](#) [2] or deanery for guidance on funding for CPD.

- **Getting into specialty training**

The main aim of medical training is to ensure that doctors are capable of fulfilling the role of a hospital consultant or a general practitioner. Once doctors have completed their training programme, they are awarded a [Certificate of Completion of Training](#) [3] (CCT [4]). Holding a CCT [4] means that your name is put onto a specialist register (for consultants), or the general practice register (for GPs) which are held by the General Medical Council (GMC).

Specialty tutors in many local HEE offices or deaneries provide specific advice and guidance to give SAS doctors the chance to gain a place on specialty training programmes. Each specialty has a nationally agreed person specification, detailing the required competencies. You can look at the person specification for training in your specialty on the specialty training website or the GP recruitment website which will give you guidance as to what stage you should enter such a programme.

- **Portfolio pathway**

The conventional route towards attaining your CCT ^[4] is to complete training approved by the GMC, however if you are an SAS doctor who has not followed an approved training programme, but think that you have gained the same level of knowledge, skills and higher-level competencies as Certificate of Completion of Training ^[3] (CCT ^[4])-holders, you can apply to the GMC for the portfolio pathway (previously Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Registration - CESR or Certificate of Eligibility for General Practice Registration - CEGPR). Doctors who are successful in meeting portfolio pathway requirements, also qualify for entry onto the Specialist Register of the GMC. In the same way as CCT ^[4]-holders, they are eligible for appointment to a consultant post in their specialty.

Specialty tutors in local NHS trusts can support SAS doctors through these processes. The GMC website has [information](#) ^[5] to guide potential applicants through the portfolio pathway process.

• The SAS tutor role

Specialty tutors are appointed by many HEE local offices and deaneries, and often sit on a local SAS doctor committee. They can:

- support you through the portfolio pathway process (previously CESR and CEGPR)
- offer support whilst you are preparing for your appraisal
- circulate communications, eg information on funding available for CPD and development opportunities

Look on your [local HEE office](#) ^[2] or deanery website for details of how to contact your local SAS tutor.

• Resources for SAS doctors

- [GMC guidance for portfolio pathway \(previously CESR or CEGPR route\)](#) ^[5]
 - [UK SAS doctors committee meeting information](#) ^[6]
 - [BMA resources for SAS doctors](#) ^[7]
 - [BMA SAS doctors development guide](#) ^[8]
 - [The terms and conditions of service for specialty doctors and associate specialists](#) ^[9] are available from the BMA website
 - [The BMA Careers Guide](#) ^[10]
 - There are many articles on the [BMJ Careers website](#) ^[11] - use search term 'SAS'
 - [NHS Employers SAS contact reform 2021](#) ^[12]
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Links

[1] <https://www.nhsemployers.org/publications/terms-and-conditions-service-specialty-doctors-england-2021> [2] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/about/how-we-work/your-area> [3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Certificate_of_completion_of_training [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#CCT> [5] <https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/join-the-register/applying-for-specialist-or-gp-registration/changes-to-how-doctors-demonstrate-the-standard-required-for-specialist-and-gp-registration> [6] <https://www.bma.org.uk/collective-voice/committees/staff-associate-specialists-and-specialty-doctors-committee> [7] <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/job-planning/job-planning-for-sas> [8] <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/career/progress-your-career/sas-doctor-development> [9] <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/contracts/sas-contracts> [10] <http://bma.org.uk/developing-your-career> [11] <http://careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/advice-overview.html> [12] <https://www.nhsemployers.org/pay-pensions-and-reward/medical-staff/sas-doctors/what-are-sas-doctors>